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USDA news

USDA's Employee News Publication—For You & About You!

We're Building Relationships—And Getting International Results—As We Guard Against Avian Influenza

by John Scott
APHIS Legislative & Public Affairs

USDA's ongoing efforts to protect the United States from H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza are taking USDA veterinarians, scientists, and technical staff to the far reaches of the globe. USDA employees have logged many thousands of miles traveling to other countries—including China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Vietnam—that have invited USDA's assistance on preparedness to prevent, detect, and control that disease.

To effectively address the threat of H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza, USDA officials recognized early on the importance of working internationally to build relationships and to achieve results on the ground in those countries facing an outbreak or at high risk for the disease.

USDA's international approach is practical and efficient. First, by working internationally with affected countries and with organizations like the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Organization for Animal Health, USDA is partnering in efforts to detect and contain the disease, thereby limiting its spread and reducing the risk of its introduction into additional countries, including the United States. That's good news for poultry producers worldwide.

Second, by hitting the disease hard at its current source, USDA's international approach is also limiting the virus' chances to mutate into an influenza strain that is readily transmissible from person to person.

"Right now, highly pathogenic avian influenza remains first and foremost a disease of birds," said **Ron DeHaven**, Administrator of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. "Reaching out—especially internationally—and getting to the source of the disease when and where it occurs are among the best things we can do for the health of our poultry and our people."

Highly pathogenic avian influenza—specifically H5N1—is the strain of the disease currently detected in parts of Southeast and Central Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe. This strain has been transmitted to people in these regions, most of whom had extensive, direct contact with infected birds. Internationally, human cases have elevated concern about the potential mutation of an influenza strain. Scientists are monitoring for any signs of a developing pandemic influenza.

The Jan.-Feb. 2006 issue of the **USDA NEWS** carried a story on how USDA is preparing its own workplace—at headquarters and field locations—for the possibility of pandemic avian influenza.

"Note how I'm gently applying pressure from underneath the duck's lower bill, so I can open its trachea for swabbing," advises ***Brandon Schmit*** *(right), an APHIS wildlife disease biologist based in Fort Collins, Colo. He and* ***Sheldon Owen*** *(left, with sideburns), a fellow APHIS wildlife disease biologist based at the agency's Wildlife Services State Office in Columbia, S.C., are demonstrating techniques for finding—and then gently swabbing—the trachea of a duck, to look for signs of H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza. Their audience is a group of animal health specialists with the Cambodian government's National Animal Health Production Investigation Center in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. This activity is one of many by USDA specialists who are working internationally to detect and contain that disease.—****Photo by Dale Nolte***

As the ongoing preparedness activities in the workplace have continued, USDA has also been highly active internationally to combat the disease. USDA's international approach is helping to attack this disease around the globe and also to create a strong foundation for developing animal health infrastructures and animal health networking worldwide.

First, USDA created in April 2006 the International Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Coordination Group. The Group—consisting of officials from the Foreign Agricultural Service and APHIS—was tasked with collaborating with other Federal agencies, multilateral organizations, and partner countries to carry out USDA's action items in the President's Strategy for Pandemic Influenza.

One focus has been upon the public marketplaces in developing countries, where poultry, people, and the virus often mix.

USDA officials have coordinated workshops in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Indonesia to help improve biosecurity practices in marketplaces. **Marsha Sheehan**, an FAS International Program Manager with the Group, coordinated a biosecurity workshop series in September 2006 in the Tangerang Province of Indonesia.

"In the markets we visited, we saw the crowded aisles and mingling of produce with meats and live poultry. Some markets had no

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Mike Johanns *Secretary of Agriculture*

Dear Fellow Employees,

In April we celebrated National Volunteer Week, a time when we thank and recognize one of America's most valuable assets—our volunteers.

Here at the "People's Department," so named by its founder, President **Abraham Lincoln**, USDA serves people in two clear ways: by helping our farmers and ranchers produce food and by increasing food security and reducing hunger here and abroad. But our programs alone cannot tackle an issue as huge as hunger. It takes the hands-on involvement of volunteers.

Some of you work in food banks as volunteers; deliver meals-on-wheels; participate in gleaning fields after harvest; or help fellow citizens enroll in the Food Stamp Program. Volunteers also play an important role in USDA's food aid programs overseas, helping to deliver food and humanitarian assistance to millions in developing countries around the world.

Of course volunteerism touches virtually every aspect of agriculture. Whether in food banks or 4-H or FFA, I salute your dedication and compassion. As you know, I grew up with farmers. They were my idols and role models when I was growing up. They are the people who raised the barn together, that if there was a disaster in the neighborhood they put in the neighbor's crop. Nobody thought that was anything special. That's just what we did. It's just taking care of your neighbor; it's just being a good neighbor.

George Washington Carver said it best: "How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life, you will have been all of these."

During April I volunteered at the Capital Area Food Bank in Washington D.C., where I helped sort and package food during National Volunteer Week. It was a humbling experience. We were told that last year alone 12,000 volunteers delivered 20 million pounds of food to over 700 charitable organizations through the food bank. Think about that. Through these partner groups—emergency food pantries, youth programs, and shelters—this food bank serves 1.6 million meals each month to the working poor, children, homeless, and many others.

Still, the needs are great. Statistics tell us that working families and the elderly across the U.S. participate at a lower rate in the Food Stamp Program than the general low-income population. We feel it's time to do something about that.

We're making a number of proposals to the Nutrition Title of the farm bill to make it easier for the working poor to qualify for food stamps and still save for retirement, still save for college, and still earn combat pay. We also want to eliminate the cap on dependent child care expenses when we determine food stamp eligibility and benefit amounts.

With those changes we can build on the successes of our volunteer efforts. We can make sure that our neediest citizens share in the abundance of American agriculture.

I could not be more impressed by the fine example USDA volunteers set for others. Your commitment to helping the less fortunate is a part of what makes America a great nation. Thank you all. ■

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running water for cleaning and few tiled surfaces. The wooden counters and crates make cleaning surfaces difficult," said Sheehan.

Recommendations for the markets focused upon handling practices, setting up washing stations, separating agricultural products in the market, shaping the traffic flow of market visitors, and getting vendors and market owners to understand and agree upon where live birds should and shouldn't be kept.

Representatives from one market in the Tangerang Province offered to cooperate on a pilot project that would revamp their entire marketplace. Sheehan said the timing is good for the market's more ambitious plans. With collaboration in the international community, a well-made plan can more likely be matched with funding sources.

USDA plans to participate in 5-6 additional workshops in Indonesia in 2007.

A second focus for USDA's international approach is upon cooperative research efforts and information gathering about highly pathogenic avian influenza. One area of interest is in looking at the disease and how it may move and reside in reservoirs of wildlife.

At Qinghai Lake, China's largest inland saltwater lake, more than 6,000 migratory birds died in April 2005 from H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza. In response, scientists from APHIS' Wildlife Services program and the Chinese Academy of Sciences are working together on a two-year project to, among other things, identify reservoirs of the disease and develop recommendations for biosecurity and conservation for area Chinese farmers.

After initial trips in 2005 and 2006 to set the study's objectives, APHIS' Wildlife Services biologists traveled in August 2006 to China and spent three weeks surveying the wildlife and habitat around the 1,789-square-mile lake. Traveling with a team of scientists from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, APHIS researchers collected more than 1,200 samples from migratory and non-migratory birds, rodents, and the environment.

Dale Nolte, an APHIS Wildlife Services wildlife biologist who was leader for the USDA team at Qinghai Lake, noted that in January, APHIS and Chinese officials began reviewing the diagnostic results from the team's sampling. The results are expected to provide important information to Chinese officials for local efforts and to U.S. scientists regarding birds leaving the region on migratory paths reaching into Alaska.

Nolte said that similar collaborative survey work is planned for spring 2007 in Inner Mongolia and in China's Hebei Province.

A third area of focus contributing to the effectiveness of USDA's international approach is to target efforts that help countries develop their own strengths and abilities to handle outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza, as well as other significant animal diseases.

"Avian influenza is, like others, an opportunistic disease. It finds opportunities in the lack of infrastructure in areas of the developing world," said **John Shaw**, an APHIS Foreign Service Veterinary Medical Officer and Planning Section Chief for USDA's International Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Coordination Group.

By assisting other countries in developing their infrastructures and skills to detect and respond to diseases like highly pathogenic avian influenza, USDA's efforts can have a lasting effect. The shorthand word for such work is "capacity building."

Capacity building can take many forms. For example, USDA is directing resources toward improvements in two critical aspects of veterinary emergency response programs: diagnostic activities and epidemiology.

In December 2005, USDA officials traveled to Hanoi, Vietnam, to conduct diagnostic laboratory workshops. It was the first intensive lab training conducted by USDA overseas

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Notes *from USDA Headquarters*

*Secretary **Mike Johanns** spent much of March and April discussing the Administration's Farm Bill proposals in more detail. At events in Indiana, Pennsylvania, Iowa, and Missouri the Secretary spoke to thousands of people about proposed changes in the Conservation, Nutrition, Energy, Trade, and Rural Development titles of the Farm Bill. He highlighted farm program and credit changes to help beginning farmers get a foothold in production agriculture and he explained that the proposals provide a pathway to increased funding for renewable energy, conservation, specialty crops, market access, and research programs.*

In March, the National Agricultural Statistics Service announced U.S. farmers intend to increase corn planting 15 percent this spring to 90.5 million acres. Secretary Johanns said the report suggests that market forces are inspiring changes that will help to meet the high demand for corn. As a result the Secretary did not offer penalty-free early releases from Conservation Reserve Program contracts.

Corn and soybean prices have been at record highs due to demand for biofuels and strong export demand. In March, USDA announced a $9.3 billion increase in 2007 export projections to a record $78 billion. The Secretary said demand for bulk grains and oilseeds contributed to the increase but added that livestock and poultry product exports are forecast to increase $1.2 billion and horticultural products by $1.3 billion.

In April, flags were lowered to half-mast at USDA headquarters buildings to honor the memory of the 33 teachers and students killed at Virginia Tech University on April 16.

www.Recreation.gov:

USDA and the U.S. Department of the Interior joined forces to create a one-stop internet site for making reservations and exploring federal recreation lands. The interagency website allows you to view photos and information on thousands of recreation sites and explore activities from sightseeing at the Washington Monument to canoeing in a forest. You can also use the **www.Recreation.gov** site to make reservations and payments online.

"This is a refreshing change for those who have searched multiple web pages to make their recreation plans and it's an example of better coordination to better serve Americans," Johanns said.

U.S.–South Korea FTA:

The United States and South Korea reached agreement on terms for a Free Trade Agreement in early April. While the FTA is expected to create new export opportunities for farmers and ranchers, Secretary Johanns said: "While the agreement includes many beneficial provisions for U.S. agricultural products, I am confident in saying that it will not be ratified unless Korea opens its market to U.S. beef in accordance with science-based international guidelines."

9,000-Acre Conservation Plan:

Deputy Secretary **Chuck Conner** and Oklahoma Governor **Brad Henry** signed a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program project agreement on Earth Day in Oklahoma City. The vast, $20.6 million effort will create up to 9,000 acres of riparian buffers and filter strips to reduce the flow of nutrients, sediment, and other pollutants in the Spavinaw Lake and Illinois River/Lake Tenkiller watersheds.

*Prior to his participation in a groundbreaking ceremony to support "BioTown," Secretary **Mike Johanns** (center) talks with a news reporter about the details of that Indiana state project. BioTown—which, when completed, will supply the energy needs to Reynolds, Ind.—aims to develop a working community that is entirely energy self-sufficient. The March 21 groundbreaking ceremony was for the construction of an "energy suite" that will be part of BioTown.—**Photo by Alice Welch***

"Voluntary programs like this represent President **Bush's** commitment to the environment and exemplify how Cooperative Conservation promotes a healthier rural landscape," Conner said.

Free Credit Monitoring:

USDA is offering free credit monitoring for one year to 38,700 people whose private identification information was exposed on a Federal Government website. The information was removed from the website immediately after USDA learned of the potential exposure. The Farm Service Agency programs involve approximately 35,000 of the individuals and are limited to: Emergency Loans for Seed Producers, Emergency Loans, Farm Labor Housing Loans and Grants, Farm Ownership Loans, and the Special Apple Program.

The Rural Development programs involve approximately 3,700 individuals and are limited to: Business and Industry Loans, Community Facilities Loans and Grants, Direct Housing Natural Disaster Loans and Grants, Emergency Loans, Lower Income Housing Assistance Program Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation, Physical Disaster Loans, Rural Rental Assistance Payments, Rural Rental Housing Loans, Very Low to Moderate Income Housing Loans, and Very Low-Income Housing Repair Loans and Grants.

USDA is in the process of notifying, via registered mail, all those whose information was exposed. USDA funding recipients who wish to take advantage of the credit monitoring offer will be provided with instructions for how to register. Any USDA funding recipients with questions may call 1-800-FED-INFO (1-800-333-4636) from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (EDT) Monday-Friday or visit **www.usa.gov/usdaexposure.shtml**

—Patricia Klintberg

Employees *make these things happen*

Research, Education, And Economics

ARS Is Putting The Crunch On Lettuce's Worst Enemies

Cool, crisp iceberg lettuce rates as one of the country's top five favorite veggies—along with potatoes, tomatoes, sweet corn, and onions. But iceberg lettuce—and its relatives, such as romaine lettuce of Caesar salads and the softer textured, crimson-tipped or rich-green leaf lettuces—are vulnerable to attack by an array of microbes.

"That's why we're breeding strong, natural resistance into lettuces," emphasized **Jim McCreight**, a horticulturist with the Agricultural Research Service. "And that's still the most economical and eco-friendly way" to defend susceptible leafy greens from harmful microbes. He directs ARS specialists who investigate diseases of lettuce—among other veggies—as well as fruits. His team, the ARS Crop Improvement and Protection Research Unit, is headquartered at the U.S. Agricultural Research Station in Salinas, Calif.

McCreight noted that some of the lettuce-attacking microbes are ferried to lettuce fields in the saliva of piercing and sucking insects such as aphids and whiteflies. Still others team up with fellow microbes, using them as a means of invading susceptible lettuces.

"All of this moving about," he pointed out, "means that the threats to a newly planted field of your favorite lettuce can change from year to year."

In recent years, ARS scientists at that research station have developed parent lettuces that have dual resistance: they contain genes that fend off two major diseases.

For example, now-retired ARS plant geneticist **Ed Ryder**, while working at Salinas, developed five new kinds of parent iceberg lettuces—or breeding lines—that offer resistance to two viruses: "lettuce big vein virus" and "lettuce mosaic virus."

Lettuce big vein gets its name from the unhealthy, enlarged appearance of veins in infected lettuce leaves. These lettuces may be bushy-looking or undersized. The likely culprit? "Mirafiori lettuce big vein virus," which makes its way to lettuce roots via a soil-dwelling, fungus-like microbe.

"Lettuce mosaic," caused by a virus of the same name, results in stunting and unattractive mottling. Green peach aphids can spread the virus from an infected plant to an uninfected one as they move about a lettuce field, sipping plant juices.

These diseases can easily leave many lettuces in an infected field unmarketable. That's why lettuce breeders and lettuce-seed companies were eager to get samples of the new, disease-fighting parent lettuces—a direct result from Ryder's research—when the seed first became available in 2004.

McCreight said the new lettuces were the first publicly available "crispheads"—developed especially for California climates and soils—that were equipped with resistance to both big vein virus and lettuce mosaic virus.

Similarly, in 2006, a team of ARS plant geneticists including **Beiquan Mou**, **Ryan Hayes**, and Ryder—all operating out of the Salinas research station—offered seven iceberg breeding lines that boast resistance not only to lettuce mosaic virus but also to a bacterial disease called "corky root." Mou explained that the bacteria create—on lettuce roots—ugly, yellow-to-brown lesions that later harden to a corklike texture. "The result," he said, "is that the infected plants produce stunted heads that are 30 to 70 percent smaller than normal."

According to McCreight, ARS scientists at the research station are pursuing other genes that would provide superior resistance to these lettuce diseases—or to any of about a half-dozen other harmful microbes that the researchers are scrutinizing. Other sought-after genes would defend lettuces against attack by lettuce aphids and leafminers.

In addition, the researchers are trying to find more than a single "resistance gene" to combat a given disease. Why? Equipping a lettuce with more than just one gene for resistance to a specific disease "gives you a stronger base of defense," Mou said.

It's one way that ARS scientists are making that lettuce in your salad better than ever. ■

—Marcia Wood

*ARS technician **Bert Robinson** (left) and now-retired plant geneticist **Ed Ryder** harvest lettuce seeds from plants they selected—in a greenhouse test—for their disease resistance.—**Photo by Stephen Ausmus***

Rural Development

The "Unique Challenges" To Doing Home Repairs On A Barrier Island

"We were up against a lot of barriers—and I don't mean just because we were working on a barrier island."

Jeanmarie DeLoach was smiling as she said that, but she was underscoring the complications involved in responding to a particular application for Rural Development financial assistance that her office had recently received. DeLoach, the Rural Development Manager of the RD field office in Statesboro, Ga., had received an application from a resident of Sapelo Island, a small island off the coast of Georgia. It's one of the many islands off of Georgia's coast that are known as the "barrier islands."

June Forehand, a rural development specialist at the Statesboro Office, noted that the 10,000-acre Sapelo Island is the fourth largest barrier island in the State of Georgia. "Most of its residents are descendents of slaves who worked the island's plantations some 200-plus years ago," she said. "About 234 acres of the island still belong to the 47 permanent residents of Hog Hammock, which is a small community on the south end of the island—but most of the island is now owned by the State of Georgia."

And that was part of the complication. DeLoach advised that, because of its status as a barrier island, and because of its various government-protected nature preserves and other protected lands, "new construction—or repairs and improvements to existing construction—required jumping through a whole lot of additional hoops."

"In fact, we'd been told for years we couldn't do any 'home repair loan' work on a barrier island, because of the environmental restrictions. And—maybe because of that factor—we had never received an applica-

Editor's Roundup *USDA's people in the news*

Dave Johnson is a Deputy Chief of Staff for Secretary **Mike Johanns**, joining Deputy Chief of Staff **Beth Johnson** in that role.

Before rejoining USDA, from 1994 until his appointment to this position Johnson served as Chief Counsel to the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, where he specialized in food, agricultural credit, and environmental policy.

From 1991-93 Johnson served as the Deputy Director of Legislative Affairs for the Foreign Agricultural Service. He was a professional staff member of the Senate Agriculture Committee from 1987-91, concentrating on nutrition, conservation, and marketing issues.

Previous Deputy Chief of Staff **Drew DeBerry** is now the Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture with the Texas Department of Agriculture in Austin. ■

Marshall Dantzler is the Deputy Administrator for Field Operations in the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

From January 2001 until his selection for this position Dantzler served as Director of NASS's Census and Survey Division. He was Associate Deputy Administrator for Field Operations in NASS from 1988-2000.

Dantzler served as the State Director of NASS's Alabama Field Office, based in Montgomery, from 1983-88. From 1980-83 he worked as the Assistant to the agency's [then] Administrator **Bill Kibler**. During that time he was detailed to the Office of the Secretary as a career employee member of USDA's Information Resources Management Task Force which was charged with implementation of the Paperwork Reduction Act at USDA. From 1979-80 he was a Group Leader in NASS's Data Services Branch, responsible for production control of automated data processing. He began his full-time career with the agency in 1967 as a statistician in Columbia, S.C.

Joe Reilly, the previous Deputy Administrator for Field Operations in NASS, is now the agency's Associate Administrator. ■

Here's the assignment: We need all currently active USDA employees at headquarters and field locations in this country—or, to expand that, any currently active USDA employees posted around the world—or, for that matter, those located anywhere within the Milky Way Galaxy—who have had a laboratory named after them to please raise their hands.

Looking, looking, looking—okay, look, there's one hand raised out there. One lone hand. And it's attached to the arm of: **Brian Goggin**.

Goggin is presently the Deputy Director of the Food Assistance Division within the Office of Capacity Building and Development in the Foreign Agricultural Service. But from 2001-2006 he served as FAS's Agricultural Attache in Bulgaria, based in Sofia. Earlier this year a formal ceremony took place at a laboratory in Varna, Bulgaria, in which that two-story, six-room lab was officially named after him. Here's why.

When the first case of H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza was detected in Romania in late 2005, it focused efforts to assist developing countries in Europe

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tion from a resident of the island before."

But she then opted to look at the application from a different perspective, viewing residents of Sapelo Island not so much as residents of a barrier island but more as residents of McIntosh County, Ga.—and thereby considering their eligibility from that angle. "And that seemed to break through some of the roadblocks," she affirmed.

In fact, the application met the criteria for approval from RD's office in Statesboro. The application was for work done through RD's 504 Loan and Grant Program, which helps low-income and elderly people in rural areas make needed repairs to their houses. The applicant was requesting federal funds to get a new roof, new thermal pane windows, and a new storm door, plus replace damaged flooring and rotten exterior siding, plus add aluminum underpinning completely around her residence—where she had lived since it was built, in 1949.

DeLoach noted that "The applicant wasn't asking for cosmetic work on her house—which wouldn't have been allowed as part of this program—and, among other factors, she met the requirements for age and low-income level. We approved her application."

And then began what DeLoach described as more "unique challenges."

First, the RD specialists needed to determine whether this particular property was excluded from federal restrictions on construction on Coastal Barrier Islands. That required providing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with either a map or an aerial photograph. Its purpose would be to provide enough detail so that the Fish and Wildlife Service could pinpoint the exact location of the property in question on Sapelo Island, compare the property's location relative to the Coastal Barrier Resources System boundary on the island—and then decide whether to approve the construction.

Second, the island is accessible only by a state-run ferry or private boats. "So," Forehand said, "this meant that any visitors—like us—were dependent on someone to meet us at the ferry and take us around."

Third, those complications concerning access would, naturally, also apply to contractors willing to bid on the repair work involved through RD's financial assistance. "This," explained Forehand, "meant that any contractor interested in doing this work would have to haul all their construction materials—and their vehicles—to the island by using a barge. That, understandably, would jack up the cost of the work."

"Unique challenges," indeed.

But let's cut to the chase. DeLoach said her RD office DID provide the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with an aerial map as required—and thereby DID receive approval from that agency to proceed with the project.

In addition, they DID find a contractor who was willing to overcome the additional logistical and transportation complications of this project. "Actually," she quipped, "I had to beg him—really—to do the work, since he lived three hours away. But he did it!"

Finally, the RD staff DID arrange to ferry to the island for inspections of the project.

So, eleven months after the applicant had initially requested financial assistance from RD, the project was completed.

"When I was a little girl," recounted DeLoach, "if I ever said 'I can't,' my mother would come back with 'Can't never could'."

"So I guess in the back of my mind those words still ring true—and I just was *not* going to give up on this project." ■

—Ron Hall

in combating that disease. "H5N1 was relatively new to our continent," Goggin recounted.

Accordingly, in January 2006 the Government of China, the European Commission, and the World Bank co-sponsored an "International Pledging Conference on Avian and Human Influenza" in Beijing, China to address that threat internationally.

One result of that meeting was that participants pledged millions of dollars to fight H5N1 avian flu around the world, including $10 million devoted to that effort in eastern Europe. "Even though I didn't attend that meeting, I was able to latch onto some of that money for specific use in Bulgaria and Romania," Goggin said.

"We also initiated an agreement," he recounted, "that, if my office provided a certain amount of the pledged money—that was being handled by the U.S. Agency for International Development—then the Bulgarian government would, in effect, match that money. Then we'd use that money to restore a laboratory in Varna, Bulgaria, which the Bulgarian government could use in the fight against avian flu."

"At the time that facility was rundown and decrepit—in fact, it was actually closed," he continued. "So this ended up being a 'matching funds' arrangement. It took awhile, and I kept encouraging this initiative, but in January 2006 the Bulgarian government provided its portion of the money, and work began in earnest that spring to restore the lab."

He said that he also used some of the pledged funds to purchase supplies and equipment for that lab, such as those for conducting an 'ELISA' test which, he explained, provides a quick test for detecting the presence of avian flu in poultry.

He also used some of the pledged funding to provide laboratory training, at USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories in Ames, Iowa, for veterinarians and other specialists from Bulgaria who would be staffing the lab. The training included lectures and hands-on laboratory work on combating highly pathogenic avian influenza.

Goggin pointed out that officials with USAID were very helpful in the success of these initiatives. "Frankly, they liked our

PROFILE PLUS *More About: Gerald Bange*

Jerry Bange, Chairman of the World Agricultural Outlook Board (WAOB), knew early on that agriculture was for him. Born in Baltimore, he was raised in suburban Glen Burnie, Md., where he always had a garden.

"I don't think my Dad understood my fascination with growing vegetables and other plants. He was a toolmaker. Agriculture was not in his vocabulary," Bange said. Nevertheless Bange channeled that interest in the natural world into a degree in agriculture at the University of Maryland, one of three he would ultimately earn. He also received a Masters Degree and a Ph.D. in agricultural economics, all at the University of Maryland.

Bange started his career at USDA as an agricultural marketing specialist with the Agricultural Research Service in 1971. He later served in the Foreign Agricultural Service where, in 1981, he became Director of the Foreign Production Estimates Division, and in January 1983, he was appointed Deputy Assistant Administrator for International Agricultural Statistics. In October 1983 he transferred to the WAOB, now part of the Office of the Chief Economist, where he served as Deputy Chairperson. In 1994 he was named Chairman.

Today he is responsible for the production and release of some of the most eagerly awaited information in the world: the monthly World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) Report. Issued the same day as the National Agricultural Statistics Service's Crop Production Report, this market-sensitive data is used by analysts worldwide to establish commodity prices and analyze diverse issues ranging from food security to investing in an ethanol plant.

"The World Board has great staff but we are really the tip of the structure in the production of this report. Our information comes from the ground up from FAS's 70 posts overseas, from the Economic Research Service, the Agricultural Marketing Service, and the Farm Service Agency. At various times during the year, about 125 Department employees contribute to the WASDE Report," Bange said. The World Board is also responsible for monitoring global weather, the wildcard in farming that can make or break a crop. WAOB issues daily and weekly weather reports and each month weather analysis is a key input to the WASDE Report. It is also responsible for the annual Agricultural Outlook Forum.

Bange's office is located within a locked corridor in USDA's South Building in Washington, DC. During compilation of the WASDE Report, no one can leave or communicate with the outside world by phone or computer. These restrictions ensure the report's integrity.

Every month for the past twenty-three years, Bange has signed off on the WASDE Report. He comes to work at 4 a.m. and stays through the work day. "I just recorded my 281st consecutive lock up" with the release of the March WASDE Report. "I wonder some days if I need to 'Get a Life'," he joked.

Don't believe it. Bange is justly proud of the accomplishments his office has made in sharing the methodology USDA uses to collect economic intelligence and provide commodity outlook to the world. The more such a common language is used, the better the data.

That is not to say there haven't been hurdles to overcome. In 1997 China, which has always been reluctant to share commodity information beyond rudimentary production data, approached USDA for help in conducting its first complete agricultural census. Working with NASS and the World Board, China developed a census. But as Bange pointed out, "They had 7 million surveyors going into the fields, asking farmers how many pigs they raised, what crops they grew, and what stocks they had. An incredible task."

But the results of that work, to get a better measure of production worldwide, have paid off. "Now, when we have low stocks of a commodity, prices are less volatile than they used to be. This may be partly because the market has more confidence in the numbers. At least, we would like to think so," Bange said.

Bange noted that USDA has worked hard to instill public confidence in its situation and outlook program. Starting in the mid-1990s, NASS began inviting producer groups to the Secretary's Briefing that precedes the release of the Crop Production Report and the WASDE Report each month. "We wanted them to see what we are doing. It gives them more confidence in the system and they pass that along to their neighbors at home," he said.

Last Book Read: *"Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln"* by **Doris Kearns Goodwin**.

Last Movie Seen: *"Breach."*

Hobbies: Maintaining a 3/4-acre display garden for the American Hemerocallis (Daylily) Society. With his wife **Faith**, Bange grows over 1,000 daylilies, which bloom from spring into fall.

Favorite Weekend Breakfast: Friendly's "Senior Breakfast."

Priorities In The Months Ahead: "Helping manage the budget of the Office of the Chief Economist, given this year's continuing resolution. Analyzing the impact of ethanol and other renewable fuels on supply and demand for the 2007/2008 crop year. Laying the groundwork for next year's Agricultural Outlook Forum."

—Patricia Klintberg

work," he recounted. "We had proven ourselves capable of providing technical assistance and agricultural development projects in the Embassy, and we had close relationships with Bulgaria's veterinary service."

So, about Goggin's name on the Bulgarian lab in Varna: how did that happen?

"Well," he acknowledged, "I guess I had good relations with **Nihat Kabil**, who is the Minister of Agriculture, Forest, and Fisheries for Bulgaria."

"As I recall," Goggin continued, "at my going-away party in June 2006, Minister Kabil announced that he was going to name that lab after me."

Then the next day, Goggin had a meeting with members of the Agricultural Committee in the Bulgarian Parliament. It's an equivalent of the Agriculture Committees in the U.S. Congress. "They said at that meeting that they were going to pass legislation to name that lab after me. I thought 'Wow!'"

That ultimately happened. So on Feb. 22, 2007, in a formal ceremony at the lab, a marble plaque containing the words "Brian Goggin" in gold letters was mounted at the entrance to the lab. According to FAS public affairs specialist **John Rice**, attendees at the ceremony included current FAS Agricultural Attache **Susan Reid**, USAID Director for Bulgaria **Michael Fritz**, and Bulgaria's Chief Veterinarian **Jecko Biatchev.**

And Goggin too? "I couldn't make it," he confessed. "But they sent me lots of pictures. And I'll plan to visit it sometime in the near future, possibly during a ski vacation in Europe."

Goggin said that "much of the success of the effort to restore and then equip the lab in Varna belongs to **Mila Boshnakova**, our agricultural specialist based at our U.S. Embassy in Sofia."

"She was the one who ultimately got all that equipment safely dispersed to the lab."

"And Mila was a real workhorse on this undertaking," Goggin added. "I said 'Mila, just 'go to town' on this'—and she did. She was my 'foreign national unsung hero' in this effort."

"What I did was to pitch our office's ability to do this work," he said. "I was the pitchman—the closer, if you will—but my staff there really did the work. I won't forget that." ■

—Ron Hall

Avian Influenza...continued from pg. 2

to combat highly pathogenic avian influenza. Two classes of 12-15 students each participated in the nine-day course that involved lecture and hands-on laboratory work.

Jan Pedersen, an APHIS microbiologist and instructor at USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) in Ames, Iowa, said that similar intensive diagnostic courses have since been hosted for foreign participants at NVSL in Ames. The NVSL diagnostic training sessions, co-sponsored by FAS, APHIS, and the Agricultural Research Service, have further expanded international diagnostic resources and, equally as important, forged professional relationships among the participating scientists.

USDA and the Association for Veterinary Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine (AVEPM) are also assisting countries with their capacity for epidemiological work, which is the business of investigating and understanding outbreaks to find ways to prevent, detect, and interrupt an unfolding disease situation.

Cristobal Zepeda, lead coordinator for international activities at APHIS' Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health in Fort Collins, Colo., organized epidemiology workshops held in August 2006 in Bangkok, Thailand and Cairo, Egypt in January 2007. Similar regional workshops are scheduled in Vienna, Austria; and Dakar, Senegal.

"Every day, we ran practical exercises," Zepeda said. "The students were given a mass of data, and they had to untangle the whole mess and sort out the hard questions. How would you analyze this? How would you do a risk assessment? How would you approach more survey work?"

Under USDA sponsorship, the AVEPM is to conduct epidemiological courses in 2007 in Indonesia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Turkey.

A fourth key part of USDA's efforts is the spirit of intensified networking and relationship building that characterizes much of USDA's international avian influenza program. Much of the work is accomplished through partnerships that blend the resources of governments, multinational organizations, animal health associations, academia, and industry.

An example is the October 2006 launching of the Crisis Management Center for animal health in Rome, Italy. Run by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in collaboration with the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the Center was created to quickly draw from international resources and provide emergency response teams to host countries that request assistance on animal disease outbreaks. To date, much of the Center's focus has been upon H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza. Through fiscal year 2007, USDA contributed $2.1 million and three veterinary specialists to the Center.

Micah Rosenblum, an FAS Special Projects Officer and Deputy Director for USDA's international coordination group, said recent agreements with both FAO and OIE have streamlined USDA's participation in multilateral efforts to combat highly pathogenic avian influenza. "Under the agreements, USDA can quickly provide technical personnel and other critical resources to assist countries with highly pathogenic avian influenza."

APHIS veterinarian **Gary Brickler** is one of the three USDA veterinarians assigned to the Crisis Management Center in Rome.

One of the Center's goals is to be able to provide a rapid and focused response to international requests for assistance regarding highly pathogenic avian influenza. "Depending on the needs, we can structure a team with very targeted skills and experience," said Brickler. Organizationally the Center is prepared for handling multiple outbreak scenarios and for providing assistance ranging from disease and needs assessments to general surveillance, eradication, and vaccination.

*"It's important for you as poultry owners to work with your local and federal officials. They'll need your help to stamp out H5N1—and any other poultry disease, for that matter," explains **Cheryl French** (standing), an APHIS veterinarian based at the agency's International Services Field Office in Dakar, Senegal. She is discussing, with a group of poultry producers in Kaduna, Nigeria, how they can better protect their flocks from highly pathogenic avian influenza. —**Photo by Joe Annelli***

In December 2006, the Center completed an assessment mission looking at highly pathogenic avian influenza and wildlife detections in South Korea. The entire mission was conceived, staffed, and carried out within a brisk, two-week timeframe.

The mission's success and, in many ways, the launching of the Crisis Management Center itself exemplify the merit of USDA's approach in combating H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza. By building strong, international relationships and supporting the development of veterinary infrastructures, USDA is helping to ensure better action in the countries and on the ground where it matters most. ■

*"I think our contractor did a nice job on this aluminum underpinning," affirms **Jeanmarie DeLoach** (right), the Rural Development Manager of the RD field office in Statesboro, Ga. She and rural development specialist **June Forehand** are examining the results of some home repair work, completed with RD financial assistance, on behalf of one of the 47 permanent residents of Sapelo Island—a "barrier island" off the coast of Georgia. Because of the various government-protected nature preserves on the island, plus a variety of logistical complications, this home repair project provided "unique challenges." In fact, the application for RD financial assistance on this residence was the first one that RD's field office in Statesboro had ever received from Sapelo Island. Note the story on page 4.—**Photo by Fred Hay, Jr.***

Help Us Find

Alexander Masatoshi Tanigawa

Missing: **2-17-2007** From: **Salt Lake City, UT**
D.O.B. **1-20-2006** Sex: **Male**
Hair: **Brown** Eyes: **Brown**
Height: **2 ft. 2 in.** Weight: **20 lbs.**

If you have information, please call

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National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

USDA-Sponsored Calendar Highlights

■ **May 2-4**

CYFAR (Children, Youth, & Families at Risk) 2007 Conference
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www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/family/cyfar/announcement.html

■ **Month of May**

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month
USDA headquarters and field offices
(202) 720-7314 or (202) 720-6382 (TDD)

■ **Month of June**

National Gay and Lesbian Pride Month
USDA headquarters and field offices
(202) 720-9664 or (202) 720-6382 (TDD)

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